



Legislative Testimony
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Written Testimony Supporting HB 6616, An Act Concerning the Expansion of Husky Health Benefits to Persons Ineligible Due to Immigration Status

Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, Ranking Members Seminara and Case, and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am writing to testify in support of HB 6616, An Act Concerning the Expansion of Husky Health Benefits to Persons Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.

The ACLU-CT believes in equality for all people, no matter where they are from or what they have been subjected to in their past. Immigrants are contributing to our state in a multitude of ways and deserve to be respected and offered help when they need it. Medical care is a human right, so immigration status should have no impact on someone's ability to access healthcare. House Bill 6616 recognizes and codifies that value.

Noncitizens are significantly more likely to be uninsured than citizens, with an estimated 45 percent of undocumented immigrants being uninsured.¹ In Connecticut, 52 percent of the 120,000 undocumented immigrants in the state do not have any form of health insurance coverage.² This could be a contributing factor to the low rate of healthcare utilization by undocumented people—who account for just 1.4 percent of the total medical expenditures in the U.S., even though they make up

¹ *Health Coverage of Immigrants*, KAISER FAM. FOUND. (Feb. 15, 2019), available at <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/fact-sheet/health-coverage-of-immigrants/>.

² *Husky for Immigrants* (accessed Feb. 10, 2023), <https://www.husky4immigrants.org>.

approximately 5 percent of the population.³ Clearly, there is a gap between the healthcare needs of immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, and their healthcare access.

House Bill 6616 is an essential step to change these statistics by extending access to medical health assistance for all people regardless of immigration status. No one should be denied healthcare and a chance at survival because of their immigration status. This bill could be expanded, though, by including access to low-income parents and children under HUSKY A irrespective of immigration status. Adding in access for lower-income older people and people with disabilities of every immigration status is an important change, as well, to ensure that HUSKY healthcare truly is available to everyone who is otherwise eligible, regardless of their immigration status.

Healthcare is a right that should be afforded to all people in Connecticut. Immigrants contribute hugely to our state and should not be punished because of their legal status. Accordingly, the ACLU-CT supports House Bill 6616 and encourages this Committee to support and strengthen the bill.

³ Courtney Hollands, *Do Immigrants Drain the U.S. Health-Care System?*, TUFTS MED. MAG. (2019), available at <https://sites.tufts.edu/medicine/winter-2019/do-immigrants-drain-the-u-s-health-care-system/>.